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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2349 (2017) of 31 March 2017, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to produce a written report within five months on the assessment by the United Nations of the situation in the Lake Chad Basin. The report provides an update on the progress made and the challenges remaining and suggests measures for consideration relating to elements of the resolution.

II. Major developments in the Lake Chad Basin region

A. Security developments and trends

2. The regional military offensive, led by the Multinational Joint Task Force and the national armies of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, achieved considerable gains in the fight against Boko Haram. Following the recapture of the Sambisa Forest in December 2016, a large number of Boko Haram terrorists, including a notorious commander, Abu Nazir, were reportedly neutralized in Jarawa, Borno State, Nigeria. Several weapons were captured from the group, and abducted children undergoing training were liberated. On 6 May 2017, 82 girls who had been captured by Boko Haram in Chibok village in 2014 were released. Nigerian authorities recently arrested 126 suspected Boko Haram terrorists, who had reportedly infiltrated the Damboa camp of internally displaced persons as part of a plan to attack the town. However, the Task Force continued to face financial challenges that hampered its operations, including in relation to intelligence-sharing, logistics, in particular of medical evacuations, and equipment.

3. Boko Haram continued, however, to pose a significant threat to civilian populations in Nigeria, Cameroon, the Niger and Chad. From April to June 2017, 246 attacks were recorded, resulting in the deaths of 225 civilians. Boko Haram increasingly resorted to suicide attacks, which appears to be symptomatic of their diminished combat capacity. In June, 13 suicide attacks were recorded, resulting in the deaths of 67 civilians. This was a notable increase from May, when 17 civilians were killed as a result of 10 reported suicide attacks. The group sustained its targeting of military positions, and 30 such attacks were recorded in April, 9 in May

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and 12 in June. In addition, Boko Haram resorted to looting, raids and incursions into villages in search of basic goods in anticipation of the rainy season.

4. During the celebrations of Eid al-Fitr in June, Boko Haram staged multiple attacks in Maiduguri, Nigeria, and surrounding areas, including on 7 June, when at least 13 people were killed. On 24 July, suspected Boko Haram elements carried out suicide attacks in two internally displaced persons camps near Maiduguri, reportedly killing at least eight people. On 25 July, Boko Haram ambushed an oil exploration team in the Magumeri area of Borno State, reportedly killing more than 50 people.

5. In Cameroon, the Abu Musab al-Barnawi faction of Boko Haram continued its activities in the Far North region and, as a result of such attacks, the number of civilian fatalities more than doubled in May and June, from 11 to 24. On 2 June, the group announced its intention to attack Kousséri in order to free a number of its leaders held in detention, leading local authorities to transfer the detained persons to Maroua. The control of cross-border movements of population and goods between Nigeria and Chad remained extremely challenging. Boko Haram's armed incursions and multiple suicide attacks were conducted in villages away from areas of major military operations.

6. In the Niger, Boko Haram's activities were focused in the Diffa region. On 10 April, Boko Haram carried out a major attack against a security and defence force point close to Gueskerou, resulting in the deaths of 57 Boko Haram members and injuries to 13 troops and civilians. On 28 June, two suicide bombers attacked the Kabelawa camp for internally displaced persons, killing two camp residents. On 2 July, Boko Haram elements attacked Ngalewa, killing 9 civilians and kidnapping 37 persons, including 24 women and 13 children.

7. In Chad, attacks attributed to Boko Haram and military movements in the northern basin caused the displacement of close to 2,000 people, who fled their villages around Tchoukoutalia following the attack of 5 May in Kaiga Kindjiria. Recurrent waves of suicide attacks by suspected Boko Haram elements in northern Cameroon heightened concern about the potential for the group to carry out similar attacks further north, in N'Djamena, despite the deployment of additional forces by the Government.

8. From 27 July to 1 August, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union visited the countries of the Lake Chad Basin region, to collect more information on the operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force, the impact of the crisis and the humanitarian situation.

B. Humanitarian developments

9. Some 10.7 million people across the Lake Chad Basin region currently need humanitarian assistance, including 8.5 million in Nigeria. Some 5.6 million children need life-saving assistance and 2.7 million children need psychosocial support.

10. Displacement dynamics across the region remained fluid and complex, and new displacements occurred alongside the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The overall number of people displaced as a result of attacks by Boko Haram and military operations in the Lake Chad Basin has remained relatively stable over the past year and is estimated to be 2.4 million.

11. In north-eastern Nigeria, it is estimated that, since August 2015, more than 1 million internally displaced persons have returned to their local government areas. Many of them have not been able to return to their villages of origin, however, owing to insecurity, and remain instead in the capitals of their local government

areas, where they continue to require humanitarian assistance. Overall, 1.7 million people remain internally displaced in the three most affected north-eastern States (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe), and there has been a slight decrease of 78,000 internally displaced persons since January 2017.

12. While refugee returns from Cameroon to Nigeria increased from April to June, when some 13,000 refugees returned from Minawao camp in Cameroon primarily to Banki and Pulka in Nigeria, the number of internally displaced persons increased from 200,000 in March to 228,000 as at June. Between January and May, several thousand refugees reportedly returned from the Diffa region in the Niger to Damasak, Nigeria, although a large proportion of those "returns" were part of a pattern of frequent back-and-forth movements across the border. In Chad, overall displacement figures remained stable, but Boko Haram took advantage of the security vacuum left by troop redeployments and the logistical impediments of the rainy season to attack communities. More than 700 people were newly displaced in the Kaiga Kindjiria border area in May, following Boko Haram attacks.

13. Despite the signing, on 2 March, of a tripartite agreement between Cameroon, Nigeria and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to manage the voluntary return of refugees from Cameroon to Nigeria, approximately 4,300 forced returns have been registered so far in 2017. Although the number has significantly decreased in 2017, concerns remained, given that refugees were returning to dangerous locations where conditions do not yet exist to make returns safe and sustainable. Meanwhile, the tripartite commission that oversees the implementation of the tripartite agreement held its first meeting on 10 August.

14. What began as a protection crisis has developed into a large-scale food security and nutrition emergency that includes a credible risk of famine. Hundreds of thousands of farmers across the Lake Chad Basin have missed four consecutive planting seasons, and trade routes and markets have been closed. Across the region, some 7.2 million people are severely food insecure, and in north-eastern Nigeria the number increased from 4.7 million in May to 5.2 million in June. In Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, Nigeria, an estimated 50,000 people are experiencing life-threatening, famine-like conditions. The large majority of internally displaced persons in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger live in areas affected by serious food insecurity. One in three people, or almost 1.5 million people, in the Far North region of Cameroon are food insecure at crisis and emergency levels.

15. Across the Lake Chad Basin, some 515,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition in 2017, most of them (approximately 450,000) in north-eastern Nigeria. Meanwhile, there is a high risk of disease outbreaks, given the limited health infrastructure. In north-eastern Nigeria, an estimated 201 health centres (about 40 per cent of health facilities) were destroyed by conflict. In the Diffa region of the Niger, an outbreak of hepatitis E affected more than 1,100 people and killed at least 36 in 2017, and more than half the population does not have access to health-care services or potable water.

16. Despite operational gains by humanitarian agencies in providing assistance in hard-to-reach locations, access continued to be challenging in some areas, particularly in Nigeria. In north-eastern Nigeria, along the border with Cameroon and Chad in particular, many people remained beyond the reach of aid workers owing to continued Boko Haram attacks and military operations. Humanitarian agencies have made progress in tackling access challenges through cross-border operations, logistical enhancements, the establishment of joint infrastructure and strengthened civil-military coordination. A cross-border operation has been put in place from Cameroon to Nigeria, involving biweekly convoys to deliver assistance

to people in Banki, Gambaru and Ngala. In the Niger, recent military operations resulted in access restrictions to areas such as Yebi and Dewa. In Nigeria, some progress is being made in establishing humanitarian hubs, which, it is expected, will limit the need for road travel and enable a more permanent humanitarian presence in remote areas. Three helicopters operated by the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service in north-eastern Nigeria carried more than 2,200 passengers in the first five months of 2017, and multiple fixed-wing aircraft across the region served as vital enablers of humanitarian operations.

17. The Governments of the affected countries have made significant efforts to respond to the needs of the people and partner with the humanitarian community. For example, the Government of the Niger contributed $4.4 million to the country's humanitarian appeal for 2017 and remained one of the few Governments in the world to support its own country's appeal in such a manner. The Governments of Cameroon and Chad have shown great generosity by hosting refugee populations that are among the largest in Africa. The Government of Nigeria responded to shortfalls in funding for international humanitarian agencies by pledging $1 billion at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region, held in February, and launching a new food assistance initiative with the aim of delivering 30,000 tons of cereals to affected populations in the north-east, in coordination with humanitarian agencies.

18. Despite the generous contributions of national authorities and donors, humanitarian funding for the Lake Chad Basin remained inadequate. The combined regional humanitarian appeal for 2017, which requests $1.5 billion, was 30.9 per cent funded as at the end of June, when $465 million had been received. As at the end of June, 84 per cent of the $458 million in pledges made at the Oslo Humanitarian Conference had been committed or contributed.

C. Human rights situation

19. The activities of Boko Haram and the responses by the security forces of the affected countries had an impact on the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms by the people living in affected areas.

20. Boko Haram increasingly resorted to suicide attacks, often carried out by young women and girls who had been forcibly recruited. It has attacked public places, schools markets, internally displaced persons and refugee camps, and private homes, and has looted property, especially cattle. Insecurity remained a serious challenge, especially in recently recaptured areas, while the attendant restriction on freedom of movement is one of the reasons for food insecurity, as people in affected areas are often unable to farm.

21. United Nations entities received numerous allegations of serious human rights violations committed in the context of counter-terrorism operations led by the Multinational Joint Task Force or national security forces. These include extrajudicial killings, lack of protection of civilians, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary and unlawful arrests and detention, prolonged pretrial detention, enforced disappearances and extortion. The lack of due process further raised broad human rights concerns.

22. Community-based local vigilante groups in Cameroon and Nigeria were reportedly responsible for human rights abuses, including killings and the recruitment and use of children in combat operations and in support functions. Concerns were raised about the rule of law and the possibility that affected communities were taking justice into their own hands.

23. On 9 May, Chad, Mali and the Niger signed a tripartite convention to strengthen judicial cooperation, enabling the three countries to arrest, prosecute and convict each other's nationals. On 4 August, the Vice-President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo, announced the establishment of a seven-member judicial commission to review the compliance of the Nigerian armed forces with their human rights obligations and the rules of engagement in local conflict and insurgency situations.

Child protection

24. United Nations entities documented the recruitment and use by Boko Haram of 673 children, including 182 girls, in the first half of 2017. Most of the children were recruited before 2017. From January to June, United Nations entities verified the killing and maiming of 528 children, including the killing of 67 children (47 girls, 19 boys and 1 whose sex is unknown) who were used by Boko Haram to carry out suicide attacks. A total of 76 children, including 44 girls, were used in suicide attacks in north-eastern Nigeria (66) and the Far North region of Cameroon (10). In addition, 104 child casualties were verified in the Far North region of Cameroon during the same period. While the actual figures are likely to be significantly higher, United Nations entities documented 20 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence by Boko Haram, affecting 65 girls aged from 7 to 18, and the abduction of 86 children, including 40 girls, in Nigeria. A more detailed account of the impact of armed conflict on children in Nigeria until December 2016 is given in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria (S/2017/304).

25. Concerns arose about the detention of children during counter-terrorism responses of the security forces of the affected countries. Children were detained in poor conditions on account of their or their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram, in contravention of international child protection standards. In Cameroon, six boys aged from 15 to 17 were detained at the Garoua and Maroua central prisons. In the Niger, 21 boys, including 4 Nigerians, were detained at the Niamey juvenile detention centre, while 20 others were awaiting age determination in another detention facility. Another 33, including 4 girls, who surrendered, were kept at a reinsertion programme in the Diffa region. In Nigeria, at least 493 children, including 198 girls, were held in Giwa military barracks. A total of 23 children were verified as having been recruited and used by the Civilian Joint Task Force in support and camp security functions in Borno State, Nigeria, in the first half of 2017.

26. The Nigerian army continued to use schools and hospitals for military purposes, including when classes were ongoing, resulting in the relocation of 3,283 children in Yobe State. The Nigerian military manages at least 14 internally displaced persons camps, mostly in northern Borno State. The militarization of the camps has increased the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, and there have been several reports of sexual abuse by soldiers and other personnel. In the Diffa region of the Niger, Boko Haram attacked and looted five local health centres and allegedly looted two primary schools. In June, the group attacked a health centre in the Far North region of Cameroon and killed a nurse.

Gender

27. Boko Haram abducted thousands of women and girls and subjected them to sexual violence, including sexual slavery, forced marriage and forced pregnancy. It also continued to subject women and girls to physical and psychological abuse, forced labour and forced participation in military operations, and to deprive abductees of food and water, causing some women and girls to starve themselves to feed their babies.

28. In Chad, the number of reported cases of gender-based violence increased from 67 in March to 176 in April, and internally displaced persons constituted 91 per cent of victims. In Cameroon, the crisis reportedly led to an increase in cases of early marriage of minor girls among impoverished populations, particularly refugees. Displaced women and girls continued to face a high risk of sexual and gender-based violence and to have limited access to basic services, forcing them to exchange sex for food and other essential supplies. In the past year, United Nations entities documented 43 cases of sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by security guards, army officers, camp officials, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilante groups in Nigeria. The actual numbers of victims may be significantly higher. Cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by national and international military forces were regularly reported, and the majority of allegations originated from the areas immediately surrounding Multinational Joint Task Force bases. However, very few official complaints were filed owing to a lack of information and confidence in the judicial system, among other things. The United Nations continue to advocate for the Multinational Joint Task Force to put forward a strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including by recruiting a dedicated gender adviser within its civilian component.

D. Socioeconomic situation

29. The conflict in the Lake Chad Basin continued to exacerbate the already limited access to basic services, farmlands, markets and other sources of livelihoods, leading to insecurity of lives and property, high unemployment rates and low economic participation. For many, the conflict has resulted in the loss of housing, livelihoods and productive assets, including farmlands and business networks, as well as education for vulnerable young people. Meanwhile, the heavy financial investment in the regional military fight against Boko Haram by countries in the Lake Chad Basin region has resulted in the diversion of much of their national budgets away from providing basic social services and towards addressing insecurity.

30. The crisis affected access to education in Nigeria, where an estimated 2,000 school facilities have been destroyed, 1,500 schools have been closed for more than two years and 952,029 school-aged children have no access to education. The crisis also resulted in massive destruction of basic infrastructure, health and educational facilities, commercial buildings, private houses and agricultural assets. In north-eastern Nigeria alone, the total damage is estimated at $8.93 billion, and 79 per cent of the losses are attributed to the agriculture and private housing sectors.

31. In the Far North region of Cameroon, which suffers from the highest rate of poverty in the country, chronic food deficit and acute malnutrition, as well as the lowest level of education, cereal production decreased by about 25 per cent in 2017 compared with the 2016 harvest season. Boko Haram-related violence led to the closure of schools and shops and disrupted markets and the livestock trade. The partial reopening of the border with Nigeria restored some small-scale trade with limited cross-border flows in certain areas. The rainy season and bad road conditions were expected to further reduce cross-border exchanges. Access to arable land for the displaced population remained an issue, and most of the displaced families had no option other than to return to their villages. The crisis also reduced the possibilities for transhumance routes and pasture zones for cattle, leading many livestock breeders to sell their cattle.

32. In the Niger, the security conditions continued to impede growth in the non-oil economy. The crisis and the restrictions imposed by the Government since February 2015 negatively affected the agricultural sector in the Diffa region, leading to a

significant drop in production from fisheries and irrigated cultivated areas around Lake Chad and along the Komadougou River. This also resulted in fewer opportunities for income-generating activities for young people.

33. In Chad, the budget crisis continued to limit government resources for addressing socioeconomic issues, leading to social unrest. The Government appealed for more international assistance as compensation for the costly military readiness and regional interventions being shouldered by the country. At a meeting with development partners on 24 May, the President, Idriss Deby Itno, stated that Chad had spent more than CFAF 250 billion (approximately $437.2 million) on defence and security and more than CFAF 40 billion on humanitarian aid.

III. United Nations response

A. Enhancing United Nations coherence and coordination in the subregion

United Nations strategy in response to the Lake Chad Basin crisis

34. In response to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region, the United Nations has put in place the Inter-Agency Task Force on Boko Haram, co-chaired by the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This system-wide strategic coordination mechanism includes 18 United Nations entities at Headquarters and at the regional and country levels, as appropriate, as well as the United Nations Resident Coordinators of the four affected countries, on behalf of the United Nations country teams. The Task Force adopted a seven-pillar strategy, which was updated in April.

35. The Task Force also carried out capacity-mapping of the financial and human resources gaps at the level of the United Nations country teams. The results of the exercise are currently being validated and will be used to develop a regional strategy for integrated fundraising.

Operational coordination

36. The country-specific coordination of United Nations activities in response to the Lake Chad Basis crisis is undertaken by the Resident Coordinators and the United Nations country teams, in close consultation with national authorities, guided by their respective United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

37. The operational humanitarian response to the Boko Haram crisis is undertaken by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, and coordinated through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. Working in support of the Government of each affected country, the humanitarian country team serves as a key body for policy- and decision-making, with specialized sector or cluster working groups, as well as an inter-sector or cluster working group, ensuring coordination at the technical level. Coordination and information-sharing also takes place at the regional level, among the respective Humanitarian Coordinators, resulting in the production of the "2017 humanitarian needs and requirements overview" for the Lake Chad Basin.

Coordination with partners

38. The co-hosts of the Oslo Humanitarian Conference, namely, Germany, Nigeria, Norway and the United Nations, together with Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, agreed to form a consultative group on prevention and stabilization to address some

of the root causes of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region beyond immediate humanitarian assistance. The first meeting of the group is scheduled for 6 September.

39. A regional stabilization conference organized by the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with the support of the African Union, is planned for 3 to 5 October in N'Djamena. It will be the first of three such conferences and is expected to support the development of a regional stabilization strategy for the areas affected by Boko Haram.

B. United Nations support to national and subregional efforts

Political engagement

40. Senior United Nations officials continued to advocate increased support to the countries of the Lake Chad Basin at all meetings with regional and international leaders.

41. On 31 May, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa François Louncény Fall, met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon in Yaoundé. The Minister underlined the need to provide development assistance to the Far North region. The Special Representative noted that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) would assist with developing projects, with a strong emphasis on supporting women and young people, in coordination with the Peacebuilding Fund. Earlier in May, two teams from UNOCA travelled to Chad and Cameroon to assess the impact of Boko Haram on the population, especially women and children. UNOCA is also planning a joint visit with the Economic Community of Central African States to Boko Haram-affected countries.

42. As previously reported, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel visited Nigeria from 26 to 28 April (S/2017/563). He also visited the Niger from 28 to 30 May. During his meetings with the authorities, the issues of deradicalizing and reintegrating former Boko Haram fighters and addressing the root causes of the crisis were discussed. While participating in the second regional conversation on investing in peace and the prevention of violence, including violent extremism, in the Sahel-Sahara, held in N'Djamena on 31 May and 1 June, the Special Representative met with the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. They discussed the implementation of the Lake Chad Development and Climate Resilience Action Plan, including progress with regard to the envisaged water transfer from the Congo Basin to Lake Chad.

43. On 18 April and 19 July, a representative of the United Nations Office to the African Union delivered statements on behalf of the United Nations at the meetings of the African Union Peace and Security Council on the activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force, and underlined concerns regarding the humanitarian and human rights aspects of the crisis. The representative also reiterated the technical support the United Nations provides to the Task Force through the African Union Commission, and called for enhanced cooperation between the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin countries. The United Nations Office to the African Union called for continuing donor support to the Task Force and for the region to address the humanitarian situation.

44. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict continued to call on officials of the Government of Nigeria to release the children held in detention for their alleged association with Boko Haram and to support the finalization of an action plan to end child recruitment and use by the

Civilian Joint Task Force. Her office provided support to the discussions led by the United Nations Children's Fund on the adoption of a protocol for the handover of children associated with Boko Haram to child protection actors in Cameroon.

45. On 18 and 19 July, the United Nations Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees for Protection travelled to Cameroon, where he raised concerns about the forced return or removal of refugees from Cameroon and the non-admission and rejection of new asylum seekers at the border. The Cameroonian authorities gave assurances that international law would be respected, including the principles of voluntariness, safety and dignity in the context of return, and that Cameroon would continue to provide safety to people in need.

46. From 19 to 27 July, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, accompanied by the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict led a mission to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo which focused on women, peace and security and development. In Nigeria, the mission highlighted the impact of the crisis on women in the north-east of the country. On 8 August, the Deputy Secretary-General discussed the fight against Boko Haram with the Director of the Cabinet of the Prime Minister of Cameroon in New York. On 10 August, she briefed the Security Council on the outcome of the mission.

Humanitarian response

47. Despite limitations in funding, access and security, humanitarian actors made progress in expanding the humanitarian response in what remains a challenging operating environment. As part of their scale-up, humanitarian agencies activated internal emergency arrangements and continued to deploy more staff, reaching 650 international and 1,500 national staff as of July in north-eastern Nigeria, up from fewer than 100 international staff one year previously.

48. In north-eastern Nigeria, some 2.3 million people have been reached with food assistance and almost 2 million people with health care to date in 2017. More than 700,000 people were provided with safe water; 57,000 children with severe acute malnutrition were admitted for treatment; and more than 4 million children were vaccinated for measles.

49. In the Diffa region of the Niger, 316,500 people received food support in April and May and 282,000 people received water, sanitation and hygiene assistance in May. Since the beginning of 2017, 6,370 children with severe acute malnutrition have been admitted for treatment, 157,000 people have received shelter and 98,000 people have received non-food items. Some 261 schools were relocated to safer areas, making it possible to provide emergency education support to 45,000 school-aged children by June and psychological support to 18,500 children by May.

50. In Chad, some 116,000 displaced persons and vulnerable host communities have received food assistance each month so far in 2017. Between January and May, some 8,300 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition received treatment from partners in the Lac region and more than 71,000 conflict-affected people were provided with potable water and basic sanitation facilities.

51. In Cameroon, food assistance was provided to 200,000 people in the most affected areas of the Far North region. In addition, fortified and nutritious foods were provided to more than 100,000 young children on a monthly basis to treat and prevent malnutrition. Over 57,000 people were provided with access to fresh water and 5,600 with sanitation support.

52. Across the region, civil-military coordination with the Multinational Joint Task Force and national armies was strengthened. A bimonthly civil-military coordination forum was established in N'Djamena to facilitate interaction between humanitarian actors and the Task Force at the strategic level. Participants in the forum have tackled questions around security, humanitarian access and the protection of civilians. In north-eastern Nigeria, civil-military coordination was taking place between the Nigerian military and the Task Force through information-sharing on planned humanitarian missions, capacity development in the area of international humanitarian law and protection, and the organization of armed escorts as a last resort. A civil-military coordination action plan for 2017 and 2018 was developed and presented for endorsement by the operational humanitarian country team, while guidelines on the use of armed escorts and on civil-military interaction were being developed. Liaison continued with the Nigerian armed forces regarding the establishment of humanitarian hubs outside Maiduguri to ensure adequate security for humanitarian workers. There was a particular need for greater investment in the training of military personnel in areas such as international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. Civil-military coordination was also ensured with the national armies in Chad, Cameroon and the Niger.

53. The Department of Safety and Security established a security information and operation centre in Maiduguri to track reported incidents and field movement by humanitarian workers. A security analyst was also recruited to deploy to Maiduguri to implement a regional security information fusion strategy. The Department introduced the "Safe and secure approaches to field environments" programme, with the support of United Nations agencies.

54. Gender considerations and programming were mainstreamed in the response across the four countries, as reflected in the collection of gender-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive programming and consultation. In Nigeria, partners developed referral pathways and standard operating procedures for the response to gender-based violence. Of the referrals and incidents reported for gender-based violence case management, an estimated 80 per cent were reportedly possible thanks to the implementation of those mechanisms.

55. Following the issuance in February of the Secretary-General's call for action to prevent famine, important steps are being taken to implement the new way of working in Nigeria. The United Nations country team in Nigeria is working on a strategy for returns and durable solutions, involving both humanitarian and development partners. The objective is to support solutions for the voluntary return, local integration or resettlement of displaced persons, while contributing to the resilience of conflict-affected communities in north-eastern Nigeria.

56. Since 2014, the Central Emergency Response Fund has provided nearly $147 million for humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected people and those affected by the deepening food crisis, including $46 million in 2017. Of that amount, $22 million was allocated to Nigeria in February to provide assistance in newly accessible areas and to address the risk of famine.

57. Owing to a lack of funding, humanitarian agencies were unable to sustain and further expand their scale-up. In June, the World Food Programme was forced to cut emergency food aid for 400,000 people, going from 1.8 million to 1.4 million beneficiaries, in north-eastern Nigeria, at the same time as the lean season was driving up food prices, depleting the meagre resources of millions of affected people and intensifying hunger. Other agencies and sectors are similarly underfunded across the region.

Protection of civilians, protection and promotion of human rights and children and armed conflict

58. United Nations human rights support to national and subregional efforts focused primarily on capacity-building and advocacy. In Cameroon, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa worked to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement officers and security forces in the Far North region to protect human rights, particularly during arrests, detention and operations. Discussions with protection actors enabled the security forces to gain a better understanding of the protection needs of refugees and internally displaced persons. The Centre trained local human rights organizations in the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations in the context of terrorism, enabling the organizations to effectively carry out monitoring and protection activities. In the Niger, the United Nations protection cluster established a task force to monitor respect for due process during trials of persons arrested on terrorism charges. In Chad, the opening of a country office of OHCHR to enhance regional monitoring and reporting on human rights was delayed for lack of funding.

59. Enhancing the capacity of security personnel, including through training on respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law, has been central to United Nations support to the Nigerian army. Training was also provided to civil society organizations on how to engage with United Nations human rights mechanisms in order to strengthen the monitoring and reporting capacity of the former. United Nations entities also helped civil society groups to provide legal and psychosocial support to victims of torture and gender-based violence through funding from the humanitarian response plan for Nigeria.

Countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration, and accountability

60. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre is finalizing the development of a regional framework for integrated assistance for countering terrorism for the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), as requested by the Security Council (resolution 2195 (2014) and S/PRST/2015/24). The framework currently includes nine regional projects submitted by various United Nations entities covering a period of three years.

61. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre continued to explore potential cooperation between United Nations entities, the G-5 Sahel permanent secretariat and the G-5 Sahel member States to address regional needs in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. In May, a mission was deployed to Dakar and Nouakchott to validate the projects under the regional framework for integrated assistance for countering terrorism, and a senior consultant travelled to both capitals in June to discuss with the permanent secretariat and implementing partners the organization of a regional border security management workshop for G-5 Sahel experts.

62. In May, 35 Nigerian aviation security master trainers graduated as part of a project implemented by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, in partnership with the Government of Nigeria, to deliver and sustain a high standard of security screening across the civil aviation infrastructure of Nigeria. The project was co-funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Under the advance passenger information project, the Centre and partners conducted a capacity-building consultation in Nigeria from 11 to 15 June, to develop a national advance passenger information road map for the Government.

63. Pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 29 May 2015 (S/PRST/2015/11), the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office developed a capacity-building implementation plan to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. Thirteen Task Force entities contributed 50 mutually reinforcing project proposals to address the foreign terrorist fighter issue. Among them are projects, which remain unfunded, to support Member States in the Lake Chad Basin region in their efforts to enhance rule-of-law-based criminal justice responses to terrorists, border security management and the prevention of the acquisition of arms.

64. In line with Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have developed a regional initiative for the affected countries with the aim of, inter alia, supporting the development of national prosecution strategies to triage persons associated with Boko Haram, to develop strategies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram and to raise awareness of the unique challenges in dealing with children formerly associated with Boko Haram.

65. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNODC co-facilitated a national workshop on prosecution strategies for terrorism-related cases and the need for effective inter-agency collaboration in Abuja from 20 to 22 June. The development of a dedicated prosecution strategy with the aim of prioritizing the treatment of terrorism cases related to persons captured from Boko Haram or persons who have surrendered to Nigerian authorities represents an essential step towards the development of a comprehensive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategy.

66. In May and June, UNODC trained 50 criminal justice and law enforcement officials of Cameroon and Chad, including from Boko Haram-affected areas, on judicial and police cooperation in terrorism cases, especially in mutual legal assistance and extradition. Between January and May, UNODC provided legislative advisory services to help Cameroon to align its counter-terrorism legislation with relevant international legal instruments. A draft amended law is being considered by the Government.

67. In May and June, UNODC also trained 60 criminal justice and law enforcement officers from the Niger, focusing on crime scene management, evidence collection, special investigative techniques, home search, vehicle checks and the analysis and use of intelligence information in terrorism cases. In addition, UNODC funded missions to the Diffa region of the Niger for prosecutors, investigative judges and specialized counter-terrorism investigators to advance investigations related to terrorism charges.

Early recovery and development

68. In Nigeria, returnees were surveyed to obtain their views on the planned closure of official internally displaced person camps in Adamawa and Borno States. The surveys found that the majority of internally displaced persons in official camps will agree to return to their place of habitual residence only if security, housing, livelihood opportunities and humanitarian assistance are improved. A large number of respondents indicated that, if such factors were not met, they did not wish to return and that, in that case, other durable solutions had to be considered. Findings from the survey, together with the prevailing insecurity, persuaded the Government to delay camp closures in the two States and to explore alternative solutions.

69. Early recovery clusters or sector working groups, as applicable, were active as part of humanitarian coordination activities in the affected countries. UNDP

provided overall coordination and support. The objective was to bridge humanitarian and development initiatives, build community resilience, prevent further conflicts, prepare for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees and address triggers — as well as, in some instances, underlying root causes — of the crisis.

70. In Nigeria, from January to May, members of the early recovery sector supported the provision of livelihood assistance, including cash-for-work, job creation and the revival of small businesses. They also restored access to basic social services for 617,000 persons, including 82,267 internally displaced persons, 54,844 returnees and 479,889 host community members. A total of 118,437 beneficiaries were directly supported by projects run by United Nations agencies.

71. In Borno State, Nigeria, UNDP, in partnership with the World Health Organization and others, is piloting an innovative community stabilization approach to quickly deliver an integrated package of early recovery support community by community. The programme benefits returning internally displaced persons and host communities. It also provides incentives for internally displaced persons to return and for young people to find viable occupations. The approach is currently being rolled out and will be expanded to cover additional locations, with funding from the European Commission. Plans are being pursued to adapt this approach as a regional strategy covering relevant regions in the four affected countries.

72. In Cameroon, early recovery projects contributed to the efforts of the Government to prevent and counter violent extremism by providing livelihood restoration, community infrastructure rehabilitation, support to local governance bodies and social cohesion and dialogue initiatives. Through the United Nations trust fund for human security, UNDP assists the Government in designing interventions to prevent violent extremism, including through surveys, capacity-development with Qur'anic school teachers and students, and peace messaging for greater social cohesion. A cross-border project with Chad on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent extremism is currently being developed.

73. In the Diffa region of the Niger, UNDP, together with national partners and other United Nations entities, supported initiatives contributing to the reintegration of former Boko Haram combatants and community resilience through (a) supporting diversified livelihood activities, especially for women-headed households and young people; (b) increasing the access of vulnerable communities, particularly women and girls, to basic socioeconomic services; and (c) strengthening regional and community peace and security early warning mechanisms, as well as supporting inter- and intracommunity social cohesion and dialogue for peaceful coexistence, with a particular focus on women and young people.

74. In Chad, the UNDP programme on early recovery response covered deradicalization and the prevention of violent extremism, start-up grants and business support for 975 young people in the Lac region, and the setting up of a legal and institutional framework on border management and capacity-building for security personnel with a view to facilitating informal cross-border trade in the Lac region.

United Nations support to the Multinational Joint Task Force

75. The United Nations Office to the African Union continued to provide technical support and strategic advice to the African Union Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission on the management of the Multinational Joint Task Force. The African Union Commission deployed two Human Rights Officers as part of the civilian component of the Task Force headquarters in N'Djamena. Recruitment to other posts, such as Civilian Coordinator, Civilian Affairs Officer, Child Protection

and Protection of Civilians component staff, Logistics Officer and Interpreter, was being finalized at the time of writing.

76. During the Multinational Joint Task Force donors' conference held in February 2016 in Addis Ababa, the European Union pledged €50 million (approximately $58.19 million) through the African Union Peace Facility. The United Kingdom had pledged £5 million (approximately $6.52 million) through the Peace Facility before the conference. In utilizing the United Kingdom fund, 34 vehicles, 30 rough-terrain motorcycles, 15 electrical generators and assorted communications equipment were procured, delivered to the Task Force and put to use. The balance of the fund was committed and the procurement process for more items and services is ongoing. With regard to the European Union fund, a procurement process is under way for services and goods.

77. Early in 2017, Turkey pledged to support the operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force through the African Union Commission by donating priority equipment, including explosive ordnance devices, night vision goggles and amphibious assets and equipment. China pledged to donate field and information and communications technology equipment and furniture to the Task Force. The African Union Commission is following up on the pledges.

78. United Nations entities are working towards the creation of a human rights due diligence policy framework that would promote the establishment of measures and mechanisms, in line with Security Council resolution 2349 (2017), to prevent and address violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that could be committed in the context of the military operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

Gender and women's rights

79. United Nations agencies provided critical support to the 82 Chibok girls released by Boko Haram. This included safeguarding their health care, ensuring psychosocial support and beginning the process of rehabilitation.

80. From 19 to 21 July, UNODC and OHCHR organized a subregional workshop in Yaoundé on the gender dimensions of the criminal justice response to terrorism for the Lake Chad Basin countries. Its purpose was to support the countries in enhancing the integration of a gender perspective into their criminal justice responses to terrorism. From 9 to 11 May, OHCHR in Nigeria organized a national-level workshop on the same topic.

IV. Observations and recommendations

81. I am encouraged by the progress made thus far in the fight against Boko Haram and commend the Governments of the affected countries for their efforts in this regard, including through their participation in the Multinational Joint Task Force. However, the lack of a regional plan to address the root causes of the crisis is impeding progress towards finding a sustainable solution. In this connection, I welcome the plans of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union to hold a first regional conference on stabilization in N'Djamena, in October, which should eventually lead to the development of a regional strategy that addresses the root causes of the emergence and sustenance of Boko Haram. I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to working with regional countries on bringing about an end to the ongoing violence, promoting human development and alleviating the suffering of civilians.

82. I welcome the significant scale-up of the humanitarian response over the past year. I also note that humanitarian needs have increased during the same period, requiring additional funding. The Lake Chad Basin will continue to require sustained investment in humanitarian action for some time, alongside investment in development. I urge all partners to redouble their efforts to provide life-saving assistance to the affected populations, as this also forms the basis for early and longer-term recovery. I welcome the steps taken by the Governments in the region to respond to the humanitarian needs in coordination with the humanitarian community, and urge them to sustain this effort, including by facilitating access to people in need and by fast-tracking bureaucratic and administrative procedures for the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations providing assistance.

83. I call on the affected Governments in the region, and their partners, to ensure the full implementation of the Abuja Action Statement of 2016, which aims to enhance protection and respond to the most urgent needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other affected populations. Given the continuing insecurity and lack of basic services in many areas affected by Boko Haram, involuntary and unsafe returns of refugees and internally displaced persons must be avoided. I urge the Governments of the region to ensure that returns are voluntary, safe, well informed and dignified. United Nations entities stand ready to support them in this regard. I call for the full implementation of the tripartite agreement between Cameroon, Nigeria and UNHCR and welcome the convening of the first meeting of the tripartite commission on 10 August.

84. While resilience-building must be integrated into the emergency responses, further action from development actors is required. Government-led development efforts are critical to tackle the root causes of the crisis. National and local efforts must continue to be augmented by international support, and I welcome the generous pledges and contributions already made to that end by donors. However, a significant increase in humanitarian and development funding, preferably for joint action along this nexus, is urgently required, along with the rapid disbursement of pledges.

85. I strongly condemn the continuing abuses of human rights by Boko Haram, including the killings, forceful use of children as suicide bombers, and sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, among other forms of violence against civilians. I urge the respective authorities to hold accountable and bring to justice those responsible for these heinous acts.

86. I remain concerned about allegations of human rights violations committed in the name of countering terrorism. All counter-terrorism activities must comply with international law, in particular human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law. I urge the Governments of the affected countries to take measures to prevent arbitrary arrest and detention in contravention of international obligations. Further, I urge them to swiftly investigate all allegations of human rights violations. The use of military or special courts to try civilians must be exceptional and limited to serious cases in which civilian courts are unable to undertake trials. It is essential that the Governments strive to increase access to justice, ensure accountability for all abuses and violations of human rights, and maintain their commitment to combating impunity. This should include strengthening internal mechanisms for the security forces, publishing the outcome of internal investigations and providing adequate and effective redress for victims. I also call on the Governments to take immediate steps to strengthen and expand measures to protect civilians, including in the context of counter-insurgency operations, and cease the use of vigilante groups.

87. The United Nations is committed to supporting the strengthening of international human rights monitoring mechanisms in collaboration with national human rights institutions, including by enhancing the capacity of the countries of the region. However, the lack of funding has limited the ability of the United Nations to undertake these tasks. I therefore encourage the international community to generously contribute funds to enable the United Nations to support national and subregional efforts to establish national and regional mechanisms for systematic monitoring and reporting of the human rights situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

88. I call on the Government of Nigeria to join the Lake Chad Basin countries and other Member States in endorsing the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. I urge the Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria to adopt and implement an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. I call on the Government of the Niger to define a national programme for the care and protection of children associated with armed groups. I call on the Government of Cameroon to adopt a handover protocol or instrument stipulating the release of children detained in the context of counter-insurgency military operations against Boko Haram in Cameroon and their referral to civilian actors for reintegration support.

89. The need to develop a strategy to engage women in the prevention of violent extremism is made more urgent by the complexity of the categories into which women involved with Boko Haram fall. A regional strategy should be developed to engage women's civil society organizations and facilitate their interaction with regional bodies such as the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, for example through the establishment of a women's situation room for the whole region and the deployment of gender advisory expertise to the Task Force.

90. In line with Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 2178 (2014), the United Nations will continue to support national efforts to bring to justice any person who participates in the financing, planning or preparation of terrorist acts or in supporting terrorist acts. The support will include the development and implementation of a regional and coordinated strategy, pursuant to Council resolution 2349 (2017). This would encompass assistance to develop approaches to address the full range of persons who have been associated with or otherwise affected by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, including victims as well as potential perpetrators, and to develop and implement gender-sensitive and human rights-compliant programmes for their rehabilitation. This also encompasses support for programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, where appropriate, as well as improving the capacity of authorities, including law enforcement, to prevent and investigate terrorist acts, while also respecting human rights.

91. The United Nations will continue to support the strengthening and promotion of cooperation between investigators and prosecutors, and between them and the military, where appropriate, to improve domestic investigative capacities and border control measures, to enable successful prosecutions. The purpose is also to promote international cooperation among intelligence agencies, law enforcement officials, prosecutors and other relevant actors, and to strengthen measures to counter the sources of financing of terrorism, including those of Boko Haram.

92. I encourage the African Union Commission to expedite the recruitment of civilian personnel for the remaining vacant posts in the Multinational Joint Task Force and to disburse the funds provided by key partners. I also call on donors to fulfil the pledges made at the African Union donors' conference held in February

2016, and further encourage Member States to contribute generously to the African Union Trust Fund. I encourage international support to the Task Force and to Member States in the Lake Chad Basin region.

93. I would like to thank all staff of the United Nations system working in or on the Lake Chad Basin region for their efforts to advance the cause of peace and security in that area.